

That denial — I leave it to the people, says Dr M

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KUALA LUMPUR,

Fri. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad declared today that he was leaving it to the people to make their own judgment on the denial by former Bank Bumiputra chairman Tan Sri Kamarul Ariffin that he was involved in the BMF loans to Hong Kong property groups.

"I leave it to you (the Press) to find out. You can think with the public and make your own conclusion. I have nothing to add."

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir was speaking to newsmen on his return from Kota Kinabalu where he attended the Rulers' Conference.

On the insinuation by Tan Sri Kamarul that things became worse in Bank Bumiputra after he resigned in March last year, the Prime Minister said: "You can find this out yourself."

"I have kept quiet for the past one year — that is enough burden for me."

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir announced at a news conference on Tuesday that a former Bank Bumiputra chairman and three top officials had received consultancy fees in connection with BMF loans to Carrion. He said the officials would be asked to leave.

'Unfair'

He would neither confirm nor deny the names of five people — Tan Sri Kamarul Ariffin; BMF chairman Lorraine Esme Osman; BMF director Datuk Hashim Shamsuddin; BMF general manager Ibrahim Jaafar and Bank Bumiputra senior general manager (international banking) Dr Rais Saniman — suggested by reporters.

He said the three officials helped themselves to consultancy fees amounting to \$1.1 million with the full knowledge of the then Bank Bumiputra chairman, who also took a cut.

The denial from Tan Sri Kamarul Ariffin came the next day. He said he only received supplementary emoluments

from BMF and denied that these were "consultancy fees".

Describing the suggestion of his involvement in the Carrion affair as "most unfair" and made "without thorough examination", Tan Sri Kamarul Ariffin said he had no knowledge of the huge loans given by BMF to property groups in Hong Kong and implied that these were hidden from him by BMF directors.

He also described the Prime Minister's statement as "the unkindest cut of all".

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Bank Negara Governor Tan Sri Abdul Aziz Haji Taha also declined to comment on Tan Sri Kamarul Ariffin's statement that Bank Bumiputra's operations were carried out with the permission and, sometimes, prior agreement of Bank Negara.

"Tan Sri Kamarul Ariffin can say what he wants," said Tan Sri Abdul Aziz.

BMF general manager Ibrahim Jaafar also denied suggestions that he too had received "consultancy fees".